

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

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C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 11120

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT EG

SUBJECT: MORE MINBARS AT ASU

REF: CAIRO 10909

SUMMARY: EIGHT GROUPS HAVE ANNOUNCED PLATFORMS FOR NEW INTRA-ASU DEBATE AND MORE ARE EXPECTED. OF EIGHT, FOUR ARE "ISLAMIC" AND FOUR MIDDLE OF ROAD. MARXISTS SO FAR UNABLE DECIDE IF THEY SHOULD SET UP THEIR OWN ASU GROUP OR WORK STRICTLY OUTSIDE ASU. END SUMMARY

1. REFTEL REPORTED ESTABLISHMENT THREE POLITICAL GROUPS WITHIN ARAB SOCIALIST UNION IN ACCORDANCE WITH PRESIDENT SADAT'S DESIRE ENCOURAGE "MULTIPLICITY OF FORUMS" WITHIN ASU. THESE GROUPS HAVE BEEN GIVEN NAME OF "MINBARS," A REFERENCE TO PULPITS FROM WHICH IMAMS DELIVER THEIR "SERMONS" IN THE MOSQUE.

2. BETWEEN OCT 30 AND NOV 1 THERE HAS BEEN RASH OF ANNOUNCEMENTS BY LOCAL POLITICIANS OF CREATION OF STILL MORE OF THESE MINBARS:

A. MUSLIM LIBERALS. AS EXPECTED, RELIGIOUS RIGHT HAS BEGUN FORM IDENTIFIABLE ASU GROUPINGS. PLATFORM OF MUSLIM LIBERALS, WHO WILL BE LED BY MUHAMMAD MAHMUD SHA'BAN, MEMBER OF ASSEMBLY OF CONFEDERATION OF ARAB REPUBLICS AND AZHAR PROFESSOR, CALLS FOR RETURN TO ISLAMIC TRADITIONS, IDEOLOGY, AND, BELIEVE IT OR NOT, CONFIDENTIAL

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TO ISLAMIC LAW.

B. SOCIALIST YOUTH OF EGYPT. PEOPLES ASSEMBLY MEMBER ABD AL-RAHIM AL-GHUL, DESCRIBED AS FARMER FROM LUXOR, HAS ANNOUNCED HIS PLATFORM INCLUDES OPENING KEY POSTS TO YOUTH, DEVELOPING RURAL AREAS, AND CONCENTRATING OF DEVELOPMENT OF HEAVY INDUSTRIES. HE IS QUOTED BY PRESS AS OFFERING SOME STRONGLY PRO-GOE VIEWS TO ELECTORATE: OPEN DOOR, HE SAYS, IS DESIGNED FOR WELFARE OF ALL EGYPTIANS AND GOE SHOULD CONTINUE OPPOSE ALL WARS EXCEPT THOSE FOUGHT IN SELF DEFENSE.

C. VOICE OF FAITH. FOUNDED BY ABDALLAH AMR, WHO REPRESENTS AZHAR UNIVERSITY WORKERS ON ASU CONTRAL COMMITTEE, THIS MINBAR "AIMS AT GUIDING THE PEOPLE TO RIGHT AND MORAL CONVICTIONS."

D. SCIENCE AND FAITH. DR. MUHAMMAD NUR AL-DIN, ASU SECRETARY AT AZHAR UNIVERSITY HAS TAKEN NAME OF HIS MINBAR FROM SADAT'S FAVORITE PHRASE THAT MODERN EGYPT IS FOUNDED ON TWIN PILLARS OF SCIENCE AND FAITH. PLATFORM STRESSES NECESSITY OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROGRESS THROUGH SCIENTIFIC PLANNING COUPLED WITH AN ADHERENCE TO A SOCIALISM BASED ON ISLAM.

E. ISLAMIC MINBAR. PEOPLES ASSEMBLY MEMBER MAHMUD NAFT' SAYS SLOGAN OF HIS GROUP IS KORANIC VERSE: "AND RULE AMONG THEM ACCORDING TO GOD'S TEACHINGS."

3 CURRENT TALLY OF MINBARS FORMALLY ESTABLISHED IS NOW EIGHT, WITH SEVERAL MORE IN PROCESS OF DORMATION. AMONG LAST GROUP IS ONE WHICH, IF IT GETS OFF GROUND, WOULD SEEM TO HAVE COHERENT SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC REFORM PROGRAM. THIS IS "NATIONAL PROGRESSIVE" GROUP UNDER DR. HILMI MURAD, A DISTINGUISHED LIBERAL REMEMBERED FOR HIS REFUSAL TO SUPPORT NASSER'S EFFORT REMOVE FROM BENCH ALL JUDGES WHO DECLINED JOIN AUS. MURAD, DISMISSED FROM CABINET AS RESULT HIS COURAGEOUS STAND, HAS LIVED IN LEBANON FOR SOME TIME. HIS RETURN COULD HERALD SOME CONSTRUCTIVE, THOUGHFUL INPUT INTO LOCAL POLITICS, ESPECIALLY IN FIELD OF EDUCATION, WHICH IS HIS SPECIALITY.

4. OF THE EIGHT GROUPS ALREADY ANNOUNCED, NO LESS THAN FOUR HAVE STRONGLY ISLAMIC FLAVOR, AND ONE (ISLAMIC MINBAR) SOUNDS PARTICULARLY RIGHTIST. AT OTHER EXYREME OF POLITICAL SPECTRUM, CONFIDENTIAL

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WE ARE STILL AWAITING ANNOUNCMET OF SOME KIND OF LEFTIST GROUPING. AS REPORTED REFTEL, PROMINENT EGYPTIAN COMMUNIST KHALID MUHI AL-DIN IS EXPECTED TO LEAD THIS GROUP. QUNDERSTAND THE HAS BEEN HAVING URGENT AND CONTINUOUS CONSULTATIONS EITH LIKE-MINDED ASSOCIATES REGARDING THE ADVISABILITY OF GIVING OFFICIAL MARXIST APPROVAL TO NOTION OF MULTIPICITY OF FORUMS BY FORMALLY PARTICIPATING IN THE NEW SCHEME. WHEN EGYPTIAN COMMUNISTS DECIDED IN MID-60'S TO WORK THROUGH ASU RATHER THAN

OUTSIDE IT, THEIR DECISION WAS REGARDED AS MAJOR STRATEGIC ONE.
RE-EMERGENCE OF (ILLEGAL) INDEPENDENT COMMUNIST PARTY PROGRAM
(PARTY'S POLITICAL TESTAMENT WAS PRINTED BY BEIRUT DAILY
AUGUST 4-CAIRO 8243), AFTER 11 YEARS OF WORKING WITHIN ASU, HAS
CAUSED OBVIOUS TACTICAL AND STRATEGIC PROBLEMS FOR EGYPTIAN
MARXISTS. AS YET, MUHI AL-DIN HAS NOT DECIDED WHAT TO DO. COMMUNISTS
MAY BE SWAYED BY ASU HEAD MAHGUB'S STATEMENT TO PRESS
NOVEMBER 4 IN WHICH HE SAID HE COULD NOT IMAGINE THAT ANY
MINBAR WOULD REJECT GENERAL ASU LINE. MAHGUB SAID HE
CONCEIVES THE MINBARS AS DEVICES FOR PROMOTING DEBATE ABOUT
IMPLEMENTATION (VICE FORMULATION) OF ESTABLISHED ASU POLICY.

5. MARXISTS, HOWEVER, ARE THE ONLY ELEMENTS WHO HAVE SO FAR
SHOWN HESITATION IN ACCEPTING NOTION OF MULTIPLICITY OF FORUMS.
NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS WHO WANT TO STAND ON THEIR OWN INDIVIDUAL
MINBAR IS ALREADY EXCESSIVE, SINCE MOST PLATFORMS ARE
INDISTINGUISHABLE FROM EACH OTHER. ALREADY THERE IS DISCUSSION
WITHIN ASU OF NECESSITY OF INSTITUTING PROCEDURE FOR ASU
APPROVAL OF A GIVEN PLATFORM BEFORE IT CAN BE PUBLICLY ANNOUNCED.
ASU HEAD MAHGUB IS SCHEDULED TO DISCUSS IN TV INTERVIEW NOVEMBER 7
HIS VIEWS ON HOW TO REGAIN SOME CONTROL OF THIS APPARENTLY
UNEXPECTED BURGEONING OF FORMAL POLITICAL GROUPS.
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